



NICK CARTER WEEKLY

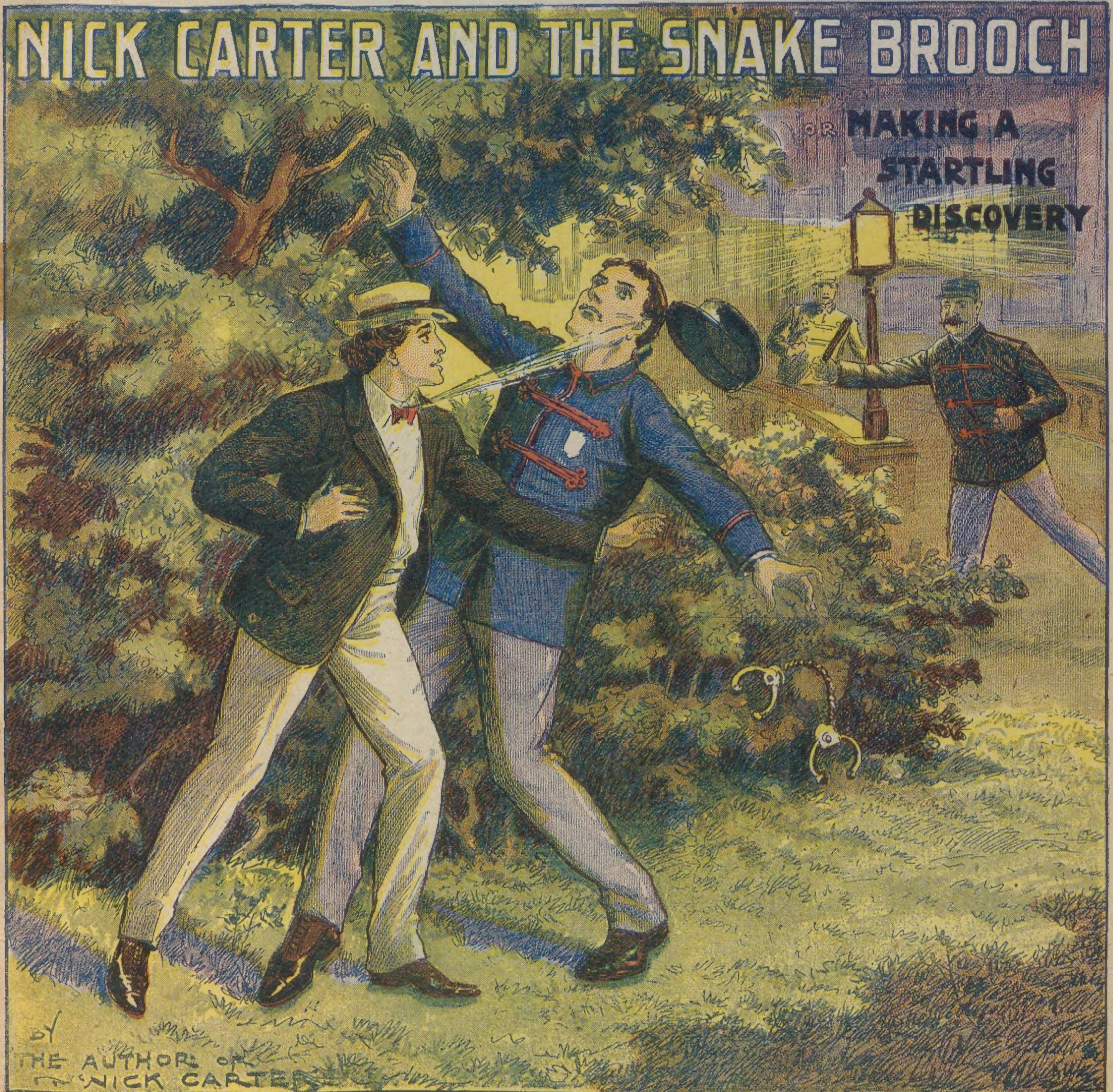
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No. 291.

Price, Five Cents.

NICK CARTER AND THE SNAKE BROOCH

OR MAKING A
STARTLING
DISCOVERY



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
NICK CARTER

THE WOMAN PRESSED HER RIGHT HAND TO HER SIDE, AND A FOUL SMELLING SPRAY FROM THE SNAKE BROOCH STRUCK NICK IN THE MOUTH AND NOSTRILS.



NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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No. 291.

NEW YORK, July 26, 1902.

Price Five Cents.

Nick Carter and the Snake Brooch;

OR,

MAKING A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

By the author of "NICHOLAS CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS MURDER.

"And so Blanche Martel is under arrest at last?"

"Yes, but I shall not feel quite safe about her until she is out of Chicago, and on her way to New York."

"Well, the officer should take no chances now. It has been a hard enough job to catch her."

The chief of the Chicago police force and a trusted assistant were sitting together in the private office of the former in the City Hall of Chicago.

Both had been very anxious all day over the operations of a number of officers who had for a long time been trailing a noted confidence woman who was now charged not only with bank robbery but with murder.

Two of the best men connected with the Chicago

force had been out for weeks tracing the woman from one hiding-place to another.

The arrest had finally been accomplished in an interior town in Wisconsin, and Fred Green, the successful officer, was expected to reach the city that afternoon with his prisoner.

Upon receiving the news by wire that the long-desired capture had finally been made, the chief had sent the following dispatch to Detective Green:

DEPARTMENT OF POLICE, CHICAGO, ILL.

MR. FRED GREEN:—You now have in your custody one of the most dangerous and desperate criminals in the world. Grant her no favors. Shall expect you in this afternoon. THE CHIEF.

In an hour's time the faithful officer wired back to his chief:

TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE, CHICAGO:

Your timely warning received and appreciated. I have never taken my eyes from the face of the woman since the moment of

her arrest. She is handcuffed and within easy reach of a pair of splendid shooting irons. Have New York man at Union depot this afternoon.

FRED GREEN.

"There," said the chief, as he exhibited the dispatch to his assistant, "that looks like business."

"I don't understand the reference to the New York man."

"Well," said the chief, with a smile; "you see the arrest is being made for the officers of the State of New York. That being the case those officers should assume the responsibility at the earliest possible moment."

"I see," interrupted the other, with a smile.

"And so," continued the chief, "when Green lands the woman at the Union Depot he will place her in charge of the New York officer."

"It seems an easy matter to transfer a handcuffed woman from Chicago to New York," said the assistant.

"That's the thing of it; it looks too easy."

"Has she ever made an escape?"

"More than a dozen of them."

"I am becoming interested in her."

"You may well say that. The story of this woman's crimes and escapes will, when completed, form one of the most remarkable stories in the records of crime in the world."

"Then Fred Green made a decided hit when he captured her."

"He certainly did. You must understand, however, that all his movements were directed from New York."

"Isn't that somewhat unusual?"

"Yes; but the case has for some time been in charge of the best detective on the continent, and everything has been done at his dictation."

"How long has the search been going on? You see," continued the officer, "that I am entirely at sea concerning the case."

"About two years," was the reply.

"What was the first offense?"

"The woman was accused of playing a confidence part in a bank robbery. The president and manag-

ing director of a bank in Broadway met the woman something over two years ago, and became infatuated with her."

"Met her in society?"

"Well, not exactly. He met her, I think, in that class of society which thrives about the fashionable hotels, knowing a little of the leaders of society but not familiar with any of them."

"Well——"

"There was no hint of a scandal about the case, for the woman, who claimed to be living under the protection of her brother, was more than discreet. It seems that the worthy pair were working a stronger game than that of blackmail."

The assistant was more than interested.

He never took his eyes from the face of his superior.

"And the end," he said, excitedly; "how did it all come out?"

"Well," said the chief, slowly, "the president and manager was cajoled or forced—no one knows which, for he would never tell—into the bank during the night time, and one hundred thousand dollars in greenbacks were taken."

"But the time-lock, the bank guards, and all that?"

"That's the mysterious part of it. It has been thought that the victim had been induced to change the combination on the time-lock in order to please some pretended caprice of the woman, and for some reason the guards were not on the main floor of the bank at the time the robbery occurred."

"There was no evidence of any force having been used."

"The vault was opened in the usual way."

"And the president?"

"He was found by the janitor the following morning in his private office, neatly handcuffed and gagged."

"His financial standing with the bank must have been excellent in order to withstand an occurrence of that sort."

"Oh, he made up the loss from his private fortune at once."

"But he took steps to find the woman, of course?"

"Yes; he placed the matter in the hands of a private detective agency. The public officers were called in only after the agency men had failed."

"And you say the woman has been arrested before?"

"Yes, and at least two men who were close upon her trail have been murdered."

"Murdered?"

"Murdered in the most mysterious manner."

"The case is a most interesting one," said the assistant. "I hope Green will come out of it all right."

"I haven't a doubt of it."

"And this New York man, has he reported here yet?"

"The New York man," said the chief, with a smile, "may have been in the city for a week for all I know. He may even be out on the road shadowing Fred and his prisoner. You never can tell when or where Nick Carter will turn up."

"Nick Carter!"

"Yes; the famous Nick Carter has the case; and it is owing to his efforts that the arrest has been accomplished."

"Doesn't he usually make his arrests himself?"

"Yes; but he is a busy man, and he would take the case only with the understanding that he was merely to direct the movements of my officers, and to take the woman off our hands here if an arrest was made. He should have been here this morning."

"The woman will be taken to the Armory station, of course?"

"No; we have orders to transfer her directly from the Northwestern Depot on Wells street to the Union Depot. The transfer will be made in an ordinary Parmalee bus, on the theory that there is safety in a crowd."

"It's a great case," said the assistant, rising to his feet. "I wouldn't mind having made that arrest myself."

"It is about time for the train to be in," said the chief. "Suppose you step over to the Northwestern Depot to meet Fred."

"Very well," was the reply. "I'll get there in time if I can, but I think I am about five minutes late."

The assistant was right in his surmise.

He was just five minutes late.

When he arrived at the depot he learned from a depot policeman that Detective Green, accompanied by a veiled lady, had taken a Parmalee transfer bus for the Union Depot.

"It seems to me," thought the assistant, as he took a cab, with instructions to the driver to take him to the Northwestern Depot as quickly as possible, "that some one should have been here to meet Fred with his prisoner. Suppose Nick Carter should fail to show up?"

When the cab containing the officer drew up at the Union Depot the transfer bus had not yet arrived.

A gray-whiskered gentleman in spectacles, and wearing a slouch hat, stood by the curb, his hands thrust carelessly in his pockets.

He glanced keenly at the officer as the latter alighted, and in a moment stood at his side.

"I am looking," he said, with a smile, "for a gentleman by the name of Green. If my information is correct, he will be accompanied by a lady. Have you seen him?"

The assistant chief looked at him suspiciously.

The last time he had met Nick Carter he had seen him in the disguise of a timid young man from the country.

"You don't remember me, I guess," said the detective. "I am here by appointment to take charge of Detective Green's traveling companion."

"Is it possible," began the assistant, "that you are——"

"Nick Carter, at your service."

The Chicago officer regarded the New York detective for a moment, and then reached out his hand.

"I am glad to see you," he said. "I shall be glad when this job is off my hands."

"Only for an unforeseen delay of half an hour," said Nick, "I should have met Mr. Green on his ar-

rival at the Northwestern Depot. I myself am very uneasy about the case."

"Oh, I guess it will be all right," said the assistant. "Fred is a good officer."

"And still," said Nick, "he is handling a slippery customer, and there is more danger between the two depots in Chicago than in all the miles of country roads which he has traveled with her."

"We shall soon know all about it," said the assistant, "for here comes the bus."

As the bus drew up at the curb the assistant stepped forward and opened the door.

"There is some mistake here," he exclaimed. "There must be another bus on the way."

As he spoke, the only passenger in the bus stepped out.

"Keep this man here for a moment," said Nick, quietly. "I don't like the looks of things."

Then he turned to the man in charge of the vehicle.

"How many passengers did you take from the Northwestern Depot?" he asked.

The man looked at the detective insolently for a moment.

Then he caught sight of the city officer, and answered the question in one word:

"Two."

"A man and a woman?"

"Yes."

"Did you recognize either of these parties?"

"The man is a city detective. I don't know his name."

"Will you step here for a moment?" he asked.

The man did as requested, and Nick pointed at the solitary passenger standing at the rear of the bus.

"Is that the gentleman who got in at the Northwestern Depot?" he asked.

"No," said the man, sharply. "He hailed the bus, and got in at Madison street."

Nick now turned to the passenger.

"Was the bus empty," he asked, "when you got in?"

The man hesitated.

"Yes," he said, at length; "it was empty."

"Take him in charge," said Nick, quietly. "Blanche Martel has escaped again."

The Chicago officer turned pale.

"Poor Fred," he said.

"He's probably still on the hunt," said Nick, "and he's likely to have a merry time of it."

As Nick spoke he stepped inside the vehicle and looked carefully around.

In a moment he started back in astonishment and terror.

The toe of a man's boot was protruding from under one of the seats.

When he rose again he beckoned to the Chicago officer to step inside.

The latter advanced to the door without removing his hand from the prisoner's coat.

What he saw as he looked in was the body of a dead man lying on the floor of the bus.

The face of the dead man was that of Fred Green. Its expression, as well as the position of the limbs, told plainly of a sudden and violent death.

The body was still warm.

"He has not been dead three minutes," said Nick, putting his hand upon the breast of the corpse.

"Take your prisoner to the station-house and report the matter at once."

"Where are you going?" asked the officer, as Nick turned away.

"Going?" said the detective; "I'm going to find Blanche Martel."

Nick advanced a few steps down the street and then returned to where the city officer was standing with his prisoner.

"It may be well for me to know," he said, "what that man has in his pockets."

The two men then led their prisoner to a quiet corner, and made a hasty examination of his garments.

"There," said Nick, in a moment, drawing a pair of handcuffs from an inner pocket of the prisoner's coat; "tell me if you ever saw those before."

"Yes," said the officer, taking the handcuffs into

his hand and examining them; "they belonged to Fred Green."

"Gentlemen," began the prisoner, "if you'll allow me to explain——"

"I advise you not to make any statement here," said Nick.

Then he turned to the officer.

"Handcuff him," he said, shortly, "and take him to the station-house."

The officer started away with his prisoner, and Nick Carter left the place, with anything but a good-natured look on his face.

"That woman," he thought, as he walked along the crowded street, "must be in league with the devil."

CHAPTER II.

A DRAW GAME.

"Now then," thought Nick, as he walked slowly along Clark street; "if Blanche Martel had not had one intimate friend in Chicago she never could have been traced to that little town in Wisconsin where she was captured. I wonder if she can be traced from the friend's residence again."

After carefully inspecting his notebook, the detective crossed over to Dearborn street, and took a cable car for the North Side.

Near the corner of North Clark and Erie streets he left the car, and walked over to Dearborn street.

"Blanche Martel had a friend here named Sarah Cathcart," he muttered, pausing in front of a large brick edifice. "She took rooms here when we traced her from New York, and it was here that Blanche Martel stopped while in Chicago. I wonder what her friend will say if I go in there and ask for her now?"

The detective again referred to his notebook, ascended the broad steps leading from the street, and rang the bell.

"I have an acquaintance here," he said to the lady who opened the door, "by the name of Sarah Cathcart. Can you tell me whether she is in?"

With all the impudence and suspicion of a Chi-

cago domestic depicted upon her face the girl said, "Wait," and closed the door.

She returned in a moment, and showed her head at a small opening.

"Miss Cathcart," she said, briefly, "is employed at a department store on State street. There is the number," she added, handing the detective a card. "Go there if you want to see her."

The detective took the card again, and soon landed at the corner of Monroe and Dearborn streets.

"Miss Sarah Cathcart," he thought, "must have changed her plan of life since leaving New York. She didn't work then."

The detective was not yet clear in his mind as to what course to pursue.

He entered the store, and pushed his way through the crowded aisles.

The woman was well known to him, she having been a consort of thieves and gamblers in New York.

His idea now was to get a look at the woman, and then make up his mind what course to pursue.

He saw her at length behind one of the long counters on the third floor.

"She has improved somewhat in appearance," he thought, "and her present intention may be to lead an honest life, but the chances are in favor of a big steal being discovered here some day."

As he stood at the counter a few feet away from the woman, making some trifling purchases, and waiting for his change, he saw that the woman was watching him closely.

"That's strange," he thought; "it can't be that she recognizes me."

At that moment a cash girl came hastily down the aisle and handed the woman a sealed envelope.

"A messenger boy left it at the office," she said, "and the manager didn't like it. He said he didn't want nothing but business going on here during business hours."

The woman opened the envelope with a nervous hand, and read the inclosed message, turning pale as she did so.

It was perfectly clear to the detective that the note was from no less a person than Blanche Martel.

Just then one of the floor-walkers stopped in front of the counter, and engaged the woman in conversation.

They were evidently not talking about the business going on around them, for they conversed in very low tones.

The woman seemed insisting upon something, and the man seemed to be holding out against her.

Nick walked away to another counter, near the elevator, and stood watching the couple for some moments.

When the floor-walker left the woman he passed to the elevator and went downstairs, glancing at Nick keenly as he approached the spot where he stood.

"If I am not very much mistaken," thought the detective, "I have seen that face in New York. I guess there are two New York crooks in the establishment instead of one." The man was known to Nick as Budd Maynard, a famous New York crook.

Nick passed back toward the counter and watched the woman keenly, but she went on about her business as usual and paid no further attention to him. If she had recognized him at all she was now certainly on her guard.

The note she had received lay with its envelope on the counter.

"If I could get hold of that now," thought Nick, "I might know where to start in."

He approached the counter and began examining the goods near the coveted paper.

The woman's face gave no indication that she was aware of his presence.

While the woman's back was turned he secured possession of the note, and was turning away, when a clear voice reached his ears:

"If you are curious about my correspondence, sir, you may read the note. Then, perhaps, you will return it."

Nick glanced back, to find the woman gazing at him with flashing eyes.

"I beg your pardon," he said, looking in seeming

astonishment at the crumpled bit of paper in his hand; "I was thinking of something else at the time, and the act of taking it was an involuntary one. I really beg your pardon."

"The explanation is sufficient," said the woman, coldly, and Nick passed on downstairs.

He was angry with himself at having been caught in a trap, for he regarded it as nothing less.

"She left the paper there on purpose to see if I would try to obtain it," he thought. "That's a mighty sharp woman, and I ought to have known better. There's a good chance now for trouble in working the case. However, the woman cannot leave her counter until six o'clock, and I shall be free until that time."

The detective had caught a glimpse of the contents of the note, but had gained no information from it.

It merely read, "I am in town again, full of business, but may see you before I leave."

It was simply signed, "John."

"It means something, of course," Nick thought, "but no one can tell what it is."

He went to the nearest telegraph office, and sent the following dispatch to his home address in New York:

Start Ida Jones for Chicago on the first train.

He knew that he had a long and difficult case to handle, and he had decided to call in Ida Jones, his assistant.

Sarah Cathcart would have to be watched night and day, and he had an idea that Ida was just the person for the undertaking.

As he left the telegraph office he noticed a spruce-looking fellow standing by the door.

One glance told him that it was the floor-walker in the department store on State street.

"That looks like business," thought Nick, as he walked away in the direction of the City Hall.

He was greeted warmly by the chief of police and shown into the private office.

"Only for my assistant's description of your ap-

pearance," said the chief, "I never should have recognized you."

"You are a trifle behind the times," said Nick, with a laugh, "for I have already been recognized in Chicago."

"In connection with this case?" asked the chief.

"Yes," was the reply, "in connection with this case."

"You understand, of course, that you can have all the assistance you want."

"That's what I came to see you about," said Nick. "You have a description of the woman?"

"Yes, and I will do everything in my power to bring the murderer of poor Fred Green to justice."

"You can do nothing now," said Nick, "except to have all the outgoing trains and boats carefully watched."

"I have already given orders for that to be done," said the chief.

"That's all now," said Nick, "but I may need more help in the future."

As Nick passed out of the City Hall on the Randolph street side the floor-walker stood near the curb, talking with a cabman.

For a moment the detective was at a loss what course to pursue.

After a moment's thought, however, he turned south on Clark street, and walked in the direction of Fourth avenue.

"The only way to bring out that fellow's strong points," he thought, "is to give him a chance, and see what he will do."

It was now between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, and Fourth avenue was crowded with its usual class of frequenters.

A short distance down the street he paused long enough to see that the floor-walker was keeping him in sight, and turned into a saloon which seemed to be patronized principally by negroes.

"Budd Maynard," thought Nick, seating himself in the rear of the room, and ordering a glass of beer, "frequented resorts of this sort in New York City.

I wonder if he has made the acquaintance of the gang here."

The seat he occupied was exactly in line with the end of the bar, and by leaning back he could see any person standing at the cigar-counter on the street side of the screen.

In a moment Floor-Walker Budd Maynard stepped into the front of the place and stood talking in a familiar manner with the bartender, who passed out to the cigar case to meet him.

"That settles it," thought Nick; "I've got all the toughies in Chicago to fight in this case, and I may as well shake this fellow, and get to work."

In the rear of the main barroom was a small room, evidently used for private parties after closing hour.

Nick carelessly walked into this place, his hands in his pockets, and stood looking out into a small court.

A door opening on the south side of the room attracted his attention.

As he looked, the door was hastily opened, and a boy came in with an empty pitcher, which he proceeded to have filled at the bar.

Nick saw in a moment that the small passage on the other side of the door must lead somewhere to a main hallway connected with the street.

He walked out to the bar, bought a cigar, and walked up and down both rooms, smoking.

Maynard still stood concealed by the screen, and the detective busied himself for a moment, and then passed on into the main hallway running east and west.

"Hello," said the bartender, in a moment; "I wonder where the old fellow went? I thought we might have some fun with him."

"Yes, you'll have lots of fun with him," said Maynard, with a grin. "Has he actually gone?"

"Sure," was the reply; "he probably went out through the main entrance to the building."

Maynard bounded out of the place, and stopped at the door of the hall on the outside.

"Has any one passed out of here lately?" he asked

of a rough-looking fellow who was lounging on the steps.

"Nobody but a bloomin' dude," was the reply.

"What did he look like?"

"W'at yer givin' us?"

Maynard slipped a dollar into the fellow's hand.

"Now, tell me," he said, with a captivating smile, "just how the dude looked."

"Red hair'n mustache," said the fellow, "freckled face, and gold eyeglasses."

"How was he dressed?"

"Black suit and cutaway coat, wid patent leader shoes."

"Which way did he go?"

The fellow pointed south.

"Do you want him for anything?" he asked.

"You must be a stranger around here," said Budd, with a grin.

"Yes," was the reply; "I just got in from Kalamazoo, Michigan. Wa's de dude bin doin'?"

Budd hastened away toward the south without making any reply.

"Nick's cunning," he thought, as he walked along, "but I've got on to another of his disguises just the same."

After his departure the slouchy-looking fellow in the doorway turned and walked slowly northward with a true Fourth avenue swagger.

"Maynard must be in luck," he thought, "to give out his money in that way. How he would swear if he knew that that dollar had passed into the possession of Nick Carter!"

It was now five o'clock, and Nick hastened directly to his room in the Palmer House.

A few minutes later a rather well-dressed gentleman left the hotel and proceeded to the third floor of the department store.

The woman was still at her counter, and Nick kept away from the place where she stood.

His idea was to remain near the elevator, and track her from the moment her duties for the day ceased.

As he stood there the floor-walker, looking flushed

and worried, stepped out of the elevator, and proceeded directly to where Miss Cathcart was at work.

At that moment the first closing gong sounded.

"In fifteen minutes," thought the detective, "the place will be closed, and I can follow the two away together."

The floor-walker passed down the elevator, remained a few moments and returned, looking sharply at Nick both times.

When the closing gong struck there was a grand rush for the exit, and in a very short time Nick and the two people whom he was shadowing remained alone on the floor.

"Come," said the floor-walker, advancing to the place where Nick stood, "take the elevator if you are going down. It will stop running in a moment."

"I haven't been waited on yet," said Nick, innocently.

"It's too late now," said Maynard. "The clerks are all gone, and I am the last man in the store. Take the elevator. This is the last trip down."

Nick stepped into the elevator, and Maynard stood in the doorway, as though about ready to step in.

Instead of doing so, however, he reached his hand in and grasped the cable.

The elevator shot up to the end of the rope and stopped.

There followed a slight sound of machinery in motion and two heavy doors in the elevator shaft on a level with the floor below closed with a jar.

The detective was suspended in the cage above the top floor of the department store, and the heavy doors in the elevator shaft intended only for use in case of fire were closed below.

He seized the cable and pulled desperately at it.

The elevator did not move. The power had been shut off below.

"Well," muttered the detective, "the chances are exceedingly good for a long session. I wonder what time the watchman gets around."

For obvious reasons Floor-Walker Maynard and

Miss Sarah Cathcart did not descend by the elevator that night.

As they passed out of the store Maynard handed a five-dollar bill to a man who stood at the entrance, evidently waiting for him.

"He'll kick when he gets out," said Maynard, with a smile, "but, as I told you before, it's only a joke. Keep him there as long as you can."

If the imprisoned detective could have been consulted he would have pronounced it a very serious joke.

CHAPTER III.

DEATH IN THE PARK RAVINE.

A short time after the departure of Nick Carter from the City Hall the man arrested at the Union Depot was taken to the office of the chief of the detective force.

"I am told," said the chief, "that you have a statement to make."

"Yes," was the reply, "and after I have made it I hope to be released."

He was a good-looking, well-dressed young fellow, who had neither the manner nor the appearance of a criminal.

"When I got into the bus at Madison street," he began, "it had one passenger, a very handsome woman.

"Her hands were clasped in her lap, and she appeared to be in great agony of mind."

"You did not tell the truth, then," interrupted the detective, "when you said at the Union Depot that there were no passengers in the bus when you got in?"

"No," was the reply, "I believed the woman's story, and told a deliberate falsehood in order to shield her."

"First," said the chief, "give me a description of the woman."

"I can only say," was the reply, "that she was the handsomest woman I ever met. You must remem-

ber that I was in her company only a very short time."

"Your short description," said the chief, "is an accurate one. The woman was Blanche Martel, the bank robber and murderess."

The young man dropped weakly back in his chair.

"Great Heaven!" he exclaimed. "Then the case is a very serious one."

"You are right there. What did she say to you?"

"She said that she was being abducted by the paid agent of an unscrupulous law firm in New York.

"She declared that she had been dragged away from a young infant, who was certain to die without her care."

"How did she account for being alone in the bus?"

"She said that her captor had returned to the depot to make a last arrangement about the baggage, and that the bus had driven off and left him."

"Go on."

"As she raised her hands imploringly, I saw that she was handcuffed. It was a pitiful sight.

"See," she said, extending one of her pink palms, 'I have the key to the handcuffs in my possession. He dropped it on the floor while searching for his checks. If you have the heart of a man make use of the key, and release me.'

"I did what any man would have done under the circumstances.

"I made use of the key, and she sprang from the bus. I can only say, by way of apology, that the woman was handsome and in tears.

"I only did what ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have done.

"All this took place," continued the young man, "in much less time than I have been telling you the story."

"Where did the woman leave the bus?"

"I can't exactly state. I think, however, that it was at least a block north of the Union Depot."

"Did you observe her movements after leaving the bus?"

"Only for an instant. She soon became lost in the crowd."

"And during this time you had no intimation of a murdered man lying under the seat?"

"Not the slightest."

"This is a very remarkable story," said the detective, "and I doubt very much about its being believed. For my own part, I have no opinion to express."

"With what am I charged?"

"With the murder of Detective Fred Green."

"Why, man, I never saw the woman before in my life. Is it likely, then, that I should proceed to such extremities in order to aid her?"

"And still," said the detective, "how could that handcuffed woman have accomplished the crime?"

The young man shook his head sadly.

"I cannot account for it," he said.

"And the handcuffs," continued the officer; "they were found, I think, secreted in one of your inner pockets?"

"I can't account for that, either," said the young man. "I don't remember of bestowing a thought upon them."

"It is very singular," said the officer, musingly.

"My people are wealthy, and I can furnish any amount of bail. Will it be accepted?"

"I think not."

"It is a hard case. I may employ an attorney, I presume?"

"A dozen, if you like."

The prisoner was ordered back to his cell, and the detective sat there in a brown study.

"Poor Green," he mused. "He is the third officer who has been murdered while in pursuit of this woman. All have died in the same mysterious manner. There has been no mark of weapon, no trace of poison. I am glad Nick Carter has charge of the case, as it is beyond my comprehension."

In a moment he sprang to his feet and opened the door.

The officer was half-way down the long corridor with his prisoner.

"Bring him back," said the chief, shortly. "I have overlooked an important point."

"Now, tell me," he said, as the young man stood on the inside of the closed door, regarding him curiously, "whether you noticed anything particularly striking or unusual about the woman's person or apparel."

"I can't say that I did."

"Think again," urged the officer. "Recall the scene again to your mind, and tell me, if you can, what it was about her that you remember most distinctly."

"Ah! I remember now," exclaimed the young man, eagerly, "that she wore a very peculiar brooch at the neck of her dress."

"Describe it."

"Its most striking feature was two gold serpents, coiled, and in the act of striking—not at each other, but straight in front. I remember now that their eyes were emerald, and that their mouths were open, showing the fangs."

"Yes," said the chief, "Blanche Martel usually wears that peculiar snake brooch. She has been known to wear it in the public street, even when the officers were close in pursuit of her."

"It may lead to her discovery now," said the prisoner, hopefully. "I hope so, at least."

"Another thing," continued the chief of detectives, "did you notice anything peculiar about the atmosphere of the bus when you entered it?"

"The air seemed to be heavy with perfume. That was all."

"Well," said the chief, "when the body of Fred Green was first removed there seemed to be a peculiar odor about the mouth and nostrils. Only for the fact that it disappeared almost immediately that might have explained the cause of his death."

"My only hope of release now," said the prisoner, "lies in the success of your officers. I hope they will do their best."

"You may be sure of that," said the detective.

The prisoner was now returned to his cell, and the chief busied himself with other matters.

He was kept at his desk longer than usual that

day, and it was nine o'clock before he was ready to leave for home.

As he rose to leave the room an officer entered with a sealed note in his hand.

"This was left at the desk a moment ago," the officer said, "by a messenger boy, who said that it was to be delivered to you at once."

The detective opened the envelope and gave a start of surprise as he read the following message:

Have two of your best detectives at the Lincoln Monument in Lincoln Park at two o'clock sharp. Watch for a negro with a white handkerchief about his neck.

The note was signed "Nick Carter."

"This looks hopeful," mused the detective. "Nick has, at least, found a starting point."

Then he turned to the officer.

"Send Wells here," he said, "and tell him to prepare for a night of hard work."

Then, as the officer turned to leave the room, he stopped him with a motion of his hand.

"I am going out with Wells," he said, "so it will be useless to attempt to communicate with me at my residence if anything happens."

At exactly ten o'clock the two officers stationed themselves at the foot of the steps at the Lincoln Monument.

It was a warm, pleasant evening.

A full moon shone high in the heavens, across which light, fleecy clouds were slowly drifting.

As a bell in a neighboring steeple struck the hour of two, a burly-looking negro with a white handkerchief about his neck left the heavy shadow of the base of the monument, and advanced to the spot where the two officers stood.

"I am glad to see you here in person," he said. "We may have desperate work before the night is over."

"Have you discovered anything new?" asked the detective, after presenting his companion.

"Yes," said Nick, "the friends of Blanche Martel have arranged a meeting at the Grant Monument at half-past ten, and I have an idea that the lady herself may brighten the occasion with her presence."

"The friends of Blanche Martel!" repeated the detective. "How in the name of all that is wonderful did you find out who her friends are?"

"Oh, I ran across a couple of them down here," said Nick, with a smile. "They are old New York acquaintances of mine."

"Did they recognize you?"

"I should think they did. They even attempted to provide a lodging-place for me to-night."

"Were the quarters desirable?" asked the detective, with a smile.

"The place was at least free from noise," said Nick. "It was in an elevator in a department store, closed for the night."

In a few words, then, Nick told the officer what had occurred during the afternoon and evening.

"How did you get out?" asked the detective.

"Oh, I always carry a funny little tool," said Nick, carelessly, "which will cut through almost anything. I got out of the elevator without any trouble, and the rest was easy."

"The watchman came, I suppose?"

"Yes, and he explained it all to me as a playful joke on the part of my friend, Budd Maynard, of Mulberry Bend, New York."

"Why didn't you arrest him?"

"Arrest him? You should have heard me laughing over the joke with him."

"And now," I said to him, as I turned away, "I wonder where I'll find these playful friends of mine. I should like to get even with them this very night."

"I'll tell you," he said, "if you won't give me away."

"I gave the necessary assurance, and he gave me his secret."

"When they went away," he said, "I heard them talking about meeting some one at the Grant Monument at half-past ten. I gathered from what they said that the person they were to meet is to leave town to-night. So if it's a friend of yours you had better hurry up there."

"That reminds me," continued Nick, "that we had better be moving in that direction. I'll go straight there, and you separate and come up from different

ways, one from Clark street and the other from the driveway by the lake.

"Let three sharp whistles be the call for help, in case any of us gets into trouble."

Nick approached the monument from the walk leading over the tunnel under the base, and under the statue proper.

While under the statue this walk resembles a lofty chamber, with arched entrances on three sides, more than anything else.

Arched windows look out over the water on the side toward the lake.

Four persons stood by one of these windows as Nick strolled carelessly through the place.

The party apparently consisted of two men and two women.

One of the men was Maynard, but it was not the Maynard of the department store.

He was dressed in a rough costume, and wore a full, black beard.

Upon the breast of the other male figure gleamed the emerald eyes of the snake brooch.

One of the women was Sarah Cathcart. The other was unknown to the detective.

Nick knew well enough that Blanche Martel stood before him, dressed in male attire.

His first impulse was to rush forward and make the arrest then and there.

Had either one of the officers been in sight he would have pursued this course.

He passed on through the place, turned to the left, and disappeared in the shrubbery bordering the driveway between the monument and Clark street.

There he met the chief detective.

"Blanche Martel, with three companions, stands in the covered way at the monument," he said. "Do you know where Wells is?"

"He is probably somewhere on the lower driveway. What do you propose to do now?"

"I feel just like rushing in there and arresting the whole party."

"I am ready," said the detective.

"And still," said Nick, "I have a sort of curiosity to know what move they will make next."

As he spoke Nick, closely followed by the chief detective, turned to the south, and crossed the road and footpath bordering the lower drive.

"If Wells is down here," Nick said, "I want to know it. We may need him."

This change of position was a fortunate one.

As they stood looking out from the shelter of the shrubbery the four figures left the arched window of the monument, and turned down the steps leading to the lower level.

At that moment the sound of oars came from the lagoon lying between the border of the park and the newly constructed lake-shore drive.

"That explains their presence here," said Nick. "They are going away in a rowboat."

The party of four now passed the concealed detectives, proceeding in the direction of the narrow channel leading from the lagoon out into the lake.

The sound of rapidly advancing footsteps now came from the north.

In a moment a park policeman came into view.

He passed the little party, and walked to the place where the boat had been drawn up to the bank.

A few yards to the south Wells stepped into the walk, directly in the rear of the party.

One of the party turned about and said something to the detective, which Nick and his companion could not hear.

The detective made some reply, and walked on ahead of the party.

The man in the boat pushed out from the shore, and rowed down toward the little bridge.

"Things couldn't be in better shape," whispered Nick. "When they get on the bridge we'll bag the whole crowd. But things will not remain in this position long."

Just before reaching the bridge the party separated, the two women going west, in the direction of Clark street.

"Let them go," said Nick, after a minute's thought. "It is just as well not to have the women

around. I should like, however, to have them followed."

"There's the park policeman," said the chief detective. "He can at least keep track of them while they are in the park."

The park policeman soon satisfied himself regarding the man with the boat, and turned back in the direction of the spot where the officers were concealed.

"It's time for us to be moving," said Nick, "and you can speak to the policeman when we meet him."

The policeman at once recognized the chief of the city detectives, and stopped at the place where they had stepped from the shrubbery.

"What did the boatman say to you?" asked the chief.

"He said that the two gentlemen of the party were going out for a moonlight ride on the lake."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes; he's all right."

"Well, his passengers are not all right," said the chief. "The two women who just left them are not above suspicion. I wish you would follow them through the park."

"Are they to be arrested if anything suspicious takes place?"

"Certainly."

The policeman darted away after the retreating figures, and Nick turned to his companion.

"It won't do for you to go down there," he said. "It is almost as light as day, and you would be recognized before we got within reach of the people we are after."

"But you may need help."

"I usually make my arrests without assistance," said Nick, with a laugh. "You can best help me now by finding Wells and being ready to take charge of the prisoners after the arrest is made. Whatever you do, don't get into sight after I get near enough to attract the attention of the people yonder."

"Remember," said the chief, "that Blanche Martel is a dangerous woman."

Nick passed on without making any reply, and arrived at the bridge just as the rowboat drew up.

Maynard stood leaning over the railing with his eyes fixed on the water, while his companion stood near the boat.

They both started as Nick's footsteps sounded on the planks, and Maynard advanced to the center of the bridge to meet him.

"Why are you following us about?" he demanded. "You'd better light out if you want to keep a whole skin."

"You done keep 'way f'm me," said Nick, in his choicest negro dialect. "I ain't doin' nothin' to you."

Maynard still advanced upon Nick, and the detective caught a gleam of steel in his hand.

Nick had very little time for thought, for he knew that the man suspected him.

He sprang forward and dealt the crook a powerful blow on the point of the chin.

Without waiting to see the effect of his blow he sprang back, and threw both arms around the body of the fallen man's companion.

"The game is up, Blanche Martel!" he cried. "You are caught at last!"

A low, mocking laugh came from the lips of his prisoner.

"Not so fast, my friend," said a female voice; "the best of us are occasionally mistaken."

The moonlight fell full upon the face and figure of the speaker.

She made no attempt to regain her liberty.

Nick sprang back, almost stumbling over Maynard's prostrate form as he did so.

The face was not that of Blanche Martel.

The woman he was in search of had escaped.

Without waiting an instant Nick darted away in the direction taken by the two women. The chief detective and Wells were by his side in a moment.

"The two women changed disguises at the monument," Nick said, hastily, "and Blanche Martel has escaped."

"There is a possibility," said the chief, "that the park policeman has captured her. I thought I heard

the sound of a scuffle over there in the ravine a minute ago."

The men were soon at the place pointed out.

There, under the bridge, they found the dead body of the park policeman.

By its side lay a woman's dress, shawl, and hat.

"You see how it is," said Nick; "he caught them while she was shifting her disguise, and was murdered just as poor Fred Green was murdered."

The chief bent over the body. There were no wounds, but a peculiar odor still lingered about the nostrils.

CHAPTER IV.

A HARD-HITTING EXPRESSMAN.

Two days after the mysterious murder of the policeman in the ravine at Lincoln Park, there was a new second girl at the house on Dearborn street.

She was young and pretty, and the letter from the intelligence office through which she had been employed gave her name as Polly Mikens.

"Dat girl," declared Pinkey Kidder, "is one of dem girls w'at has more lip dan work about 'em."

Pinkey Kidder was the star boarder of the establishment.

He was short and stout, with a neck like the cylinder of a steam engine.

Just how he got his living no one not in the confidence of himself or his tough-looking pals seemed to know.

He played the races at Garfield Park, played faro in Clark street, and occasionally hung around the House of David to catch returns on the policy drawings.

From the very start Polly seemed to take a great fancy to Pinkey.

She took extra care of his room, and never passed him in the hallway without a saucy nod or a bit of slangy greeting.

"She's a sharp little kid," the worthy Mr. Kidder explained to the landlady on the day following her

appearance in the house, "and you want to keep a mighty sharp eye on her."

Polly's duties took her to every part of the house, and she made the best of her time whenever she found herself alone in any apartment.

She searched the pockets of clothing hanging in the closets, poked her fingers into dresser drawers, and did a great many other things indicative of an inquiring turn of mind.

After Polly had been in the house one day, one of Brink's express wagons delivered a small trunk and a rather flashily dressed young man at the door of the domicile.

The young man refused to deliver the trunk to the landlady, but insisted upon seeing the girl in person for the purpose of getting a receipt.

"Well, Polly," said the young fellow, with a smile, "how do you size it up?"

"There isn't a square person in the house," said Polly.

"Well," said the driver, "keep your eyes open. If we don't get track of Blanche Martel from this place, we won't get track of her at all. Have you heard Sarah Cathcart's name mentioned since you have been here?"

"Yes; but only mentioned casually."

"I'm afraid we've got a hard case to work," said Nick. "I am positive that one of the three persons we are in search of is in communication with the people in this house. We must trace Sarah Cathcart from here and Blanche Martel from Sarah Cathcart."

Nick carried the trunk up to the girl's room on the third floor, and started back toward the street door.

In the hallway he found Pinkey waiting for him.

"W'at you talkin' ter dat girl about?" Pinkey demanded. "We don't 'low no chinnin' in dis house."

"Oh, go'n chase yerself," said Nick. "You can't make a mash there."

"I'll make a mash here in de hall," said Pinkey, "if you give me any gab."

Nick turned toward the door again with an amused look in his face.

"De next time you come here," Pinkey said, fol-

lowing on after him, "you keep outside. You make de house smell of horses."

Nick, without making any reply, stepped into the doorway.

The next moment he felt himself seized by the shoulders, and given a fierce push which would have hurled almost any other man headlong down the stone steps.

Enraged at the unprovoked assault, Nick, who had barely saved himself by catching hold of the door, turned and dealt the fellow a straight-from-the-shoulder blow which stretched him at full length on the floor of the hall.

In a moment more he was driving rapidly away in the express wagon.

"What's this?" demanded the landlady, stepping out of the sitting-room as the bully was wiping the blood from his face.

"It's just dis way," said Pinkey, stepping into the sitting-room and looking about carefully to see that no one but the landlady was within hearing, "I got a pointer to-day from Maynard to watch every person dat came here to see dat gal."

"You made a good beginning," said the landlady, with a sneer.

"Well, I didn't like de looks of dat expressman," said the bully, "an' I thought I'd see what he talked like."

"What makes Maynard suspect Polly?"

"Well," said Pinkey, "I suppose he thinks they'll pick up the clew from this house again."

"If you think she is a spy, I'll turn her away."

"Dat would queer the whole act. Let her stay here, an' we'll find out w'at she's made of."

"You have already found out what her friend was made of."

"Well," said Pinkey, with an oath, "I'll bet four dollars to a bump of the head that that man was Nick Carter. Brink's expressmen don't hit like dat."

"You can find out whether he is a regular expressman or not by going to the office."

"I didn't think of that," said Pinkey. "I'll find out

to-day. In the meantime you see that that girl don't stir out of the house."

When Pinkey passed out of the sitting-room the girl was dusting the furniture in the hall.

"What's the matter with your mug, Kidder?" she asked, innocently.

"Fell down an' stepped on it," said Pinkey, shortly. "You 'tend to your own business."

That night there was a secret conference in one of the upstairs rooms.

Kidder had been at the main express office on Washington street, and was ready with his report.

"Dere's somethin' funny 'bout dat," he said. "Dey won't say anythin' 'bout it at de office."

"That's enough, ain't it?" said the woman.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that it was Nick Carter or some other officer, and the express people let him have the rig he drove up here with."

"I guess you're right," said Pinkey. "Now, you watch the girl so she can't communicate with any one, and he'll have to come again, probably in some other disguise."

"What then?"

"Well, I'll be here and fix him so he won't be making this house his headquarters any more."

"Now, see here," said the woman, "I don't want to get into a fight with the officers. The easiest way is to end the whole thing by discharging the girl."

"No, you don't. We've got to shut off that man's wind before Blanche can have any peace, and we may as well do it here as anywhere else."

"It's risky."

"Well, we're in for it, now. You watch the girl, and we'll do the rest."

As the two separated, Polly stole carefully out of the next room, and sought her own apartment.

"This looks bad for Nick," she thought. "I must find some way to notify him of what is going on."

The only way to do this seemed to be by letter. So she wrote a note, and sealed and stamped it. But there seemed to be no such thing as getting it

into the box on the corner, or into the hands of the postman.

That night, after all was still in the house, she arose and crept noiselessly downstairs.

Once or twice she thought she detected a movement in the hallway ahead of her, but the case was a desperate one, and she did not turn back.

As her hand touched the knob of the front door, a light flashed up in the hall, and Pinkey sprang toward her.

"I'll take that note," he exclaimed.

The girl darted away, and in a moment the envelope and its contents were torn into tiny fragments.

"I guess you won't take it," she said, angrily. "No duffer like you can read my love letters."

"I was only jokin'," said Pinkey. "You needn't have torn it up."

The girl, of course, knew better, and returned to her room with a heavy heart.

"These people mean murder," she thought, "and Nick will surely be here to-morrow. How can I save him?"

There was an air of mystery about the place all the next forenoon.

The girl was never out of sight of some member of the household.

Pinkey spent his time watching at one of the front windows, and the landlady wandered about the place in great excitement.

At first the girl resolved to remain near the front entrance in order to warn Nick, should he make his appearance.

This plan was defeated by the landlady ordering her to her own apartment.

Ten minutes later the landlady gave a quick turn to the knob of the door of Polly's room, and entered as though expecting to find her in some mischief.

She did not find her at all.

The room was empty.

"Where has that little monkey gone?"

The woman looked in the closet and under the bed.

Then she inspected all the rooms on that floor in the building.

Polly was nowhere in sight.

The landlady returned to the room, and raised the lid of the girl's trunk.

Polly's clothing was all there, even to the saucy hat she wore while running errands.

"She's certainly in the house," thought the woman.

Then she went to the head of the stairs, and called Pinkey.

That worthy seemed to catch a tone of warning in her voice, and came up the stairs with a rush.

"What's up?"

"Polly has disappeared."

"The devil she has!"

"Have you seen her anywhere in the lower part of the house?"

"Naw!"

"Well," said the woman, "we've got to find her."

Pinkey's reply was a fierce oath.

"Find her?" he repeated. "She's half-way to Nick Carter by this time."

"No," was the reply, "she's hiding somewhere in the house."

They searched the place from basement to attic.

Polly was nowhere to be found.

There was one room in the house especially devoted to plots and such talks as the speakers did not want overheard.

It was a rear room on the second floor.

Its one door opened into the hallway, and its one window opened on a rubbish-lined backyard.

The backyard ended at the alley running between Dearborn and North Clark streets.

The room was furnished with a folding bed and the ordinary fixtures of a sleeping chamber.

After making the search, Pinkey and the landlady repaired to this room.

"Now," said the woman, facing her star boarder, angrily, "you see what comes of your having your own way about keeping the girl."

"It's no good chawin' de rag," said Pinkey. "W'at's to be done, now?"

"For one thing, you've got to go away, and stay away until this thing blows over."

"Wat's de good o' dat?"

"That will break the communication between my house and Blanche Martel."

"De best t'ing you can do is to give me a hundred dollars to give to Blanche Martel, and let her get out of town."

"I gave her money before, and what did it amount to?"

"Well, she can't go till she gets money."

"If you'd let stud poker alone, you'd have had money of your own to give her."

Pinkey made no reply.

"When can you see her?"

"To-night."

"Where? You haven't made an appointment here, I hope?"

"Here? and wid dat bloomin' Nick Carter on her heels? I should say not!"

"Why don't you answer my question?"

"Well, I am going to meet her at the World's Fair grounds."

"At the World's Fair grounds at night?"

"Yes; we know a way of getting into the mining building without running across any of the watchmen."

"Why not met her uptown? The fact of going to the World's Fair grounds at night looks suspicious."

"She is afraid to come inside of the police district. You see, the police down there are only watchmen."

The next minute the doorbell rang, and the landlady hastened away.

The door opened and closed, and two persons advanced up the stairs.

Pinkey, sitting alone in the room, sprang to his feet with an oath as the door opened.

"Great Heaven!" he cried. "Blanche Martel, how dare you come here?"

CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERY OF A FOLDING BED.

Nick Carter had received no word from Ida Jones—for, of course, Polly was none other than Nick's assistant—for more than twenty-four hours.

During this time he had followed many clues, and had been in many parts of the city, but had been unsuccessful everywhere.

So far as his efforts to discover her were concerned, Blanche Martel might have been in the center of Africa.

Nick should have received a report by mail from the girl that morning, but none had arrived.

As the reader understands, the note that he waited for had been torn into fragments the night before.

He was anxious about the girl, and resolved to visit the house at once.

This, however, was a dangerous bit of work.

He knew from reports received at the express office that he had been recognized on his previous visit.

Therefore, the utmost caution would be necessary now.

About ten o'clock a young man, dressed in the height of fashion, with a diamond sparkling on his scarf, and his short red hair cut pompadour, pulled the bell at the Dearborn street house.

The landlady opened the door in person.

She appeared to be nervous and excited, and stood with her ample figure blocking the half-open doorway, as she demanded:

"What do you want?"

"You take boarders, I believe," said Nick, with a smile.

"Who told you that?"

"Well," said Nick, with an air of embarrassment, "you see I met one of your young lady boarders a short time ago, and she——"

"Sarah Cathcart."

"Where did you know Sarah Cathcart?"

"At the department store where she works."

At the first mention of Sarah Cathcart's name Nick had heard a half-suppressed exclamation in the hall, behind the woman he was talking to.

Now, at the mention of the department store, he heard rapid footsteps on the inside and a door opened and closed with a bang.

"If Miss Cathcart is in the house," he said, "perhaps she will vouch for me."

The woman turned away from the door.

"Wait," she said, "and I'll see."

While Nick stood on the porch, staring at the locked door before him, the woman was proceeding to the rear room on the second floor.

Pinkey and Blanche Martel sat there waiting for her with very anxious looks on their faces.

"Well?" the landlady said, sharply.

Pinkey arose, and looked carefully up and down the hall.

"I heard what he said."

"And you saw him," added the landlady. "Now, tell me what you think?"

"Think!" exclaimed Pinkey. "I think it's Nick Carter."

At the mention of that name, Blanche Martel started back in dismay.

"Great Heaven!" she exclaimed. "To think of his coming here now of all other times."

"You shouldn't have come here," said Pinkey.

"But I am here. Now, tell me what to do."

"He can't search the house single-handed and alone," broke in the landlady. "You must hide yourself in some other room, and we must let him in."

"What then?"

"While I am showing him the rooms on the top floor, you can make your escape."

"But the house may be watched."

Pinkey gave a grunt of disgust.

"No danger of that," he said.

"No," broke in the landlady. "No man in his sane mind would think you were fool enough to come here in broad daylight."

"Why is he here then?"

"He has a spy in the house."

"A spy! And in this house!"

"Yes," said Pinkey, "and he's here to communicate with her."

"Well, we can't leave him standing at the door there all day," said the landlady, impatiently. "Shall I let him in?"

Blanche Martel said no.

Pinkey said yes.

The landlady looked from one to the other. Then she decided the point for herself.

"There is no other way," she said. "Follow me down to the front parlor, and close and lock the door behind you. While I show him the rooms, you can leave the house."

"And when I see you again," said Pinkey, "you'll have nothing more to fear from Nick Carter."

"Do you mean to kill him?"

The landlady looked Pinkey steadily in the face.

"Not in my house," she said.

"To the devil with your house," exclaimed Pinkey.

"We shall all hang, if we don't get rid of him."

The landlady turned toward the door.

"Wait a moment!" said Pinkey. "Where are you going to take him?"

"To the third floor."

"No," said Pinkey, firmly; "bring him to this room."

The landlady passed out, closely followed by the handsome murderess.

Pinkey took a heavy billy from his pocket, examined it carefully, and returned it to its place.

"I have always had my way in this house," he muttered, "and I shall have it now."

When the steps died out on the staircase, he opened the door and walked to the front of the house.

After a moment's thought, he entered a room opening to the left, and looked out upon the street.

Before proceeding any farther in the desperate game he was playing, he wanted to make sure that Blanche Martel was out of the house.

He heard the hall door open, and then the sound of two persons ascending the stairs.

He watched anxiously for the appearance of the woman on the street below, but watched in vain.

"Blanche must be crazy," he thought. "She ought not to lose a moment's time in getting away."

He opened the door of his room and listened.

The landlady and the detective stood talking in front of the door of the rear apartment.

"It's the only room we have vacant," he heard the woman say.

Pinkey smiled.

In spite of her protests, the woman was obeying his orders.

He took the billy from his pocket and pushed it up his right sleeve, leaving the strap wound about his wrist.

Then he stepped into the hall, and walked toward the rear room.

"This gentleman has been occupying the room," explained the woman, as Pinkey advanced and stood at the side of the detective; "but he can move his traps out at once, if you decide to take it."

The detective saw the fierce look in the bully's eyes, saw the billy strap inclosing his muscular wrist, and stepped carelessly back.

Just then a woman appeared at the bottom of the stairs.

"Have you found Polly yet?" she demanded. "Her work is waiting for her down here."

"No," answered the landlady. "Polly seems to have left the house."

Nick knew that the eyes of both his companions were fixed inquiringly upon him.

He realized that he was in a very tight place.

"I don't know about this room," he said, stepping away from the door. "It isn't exactly what I want."

"You needn't be afraid of crowding me out," said Pinkey, motioning toward the room. "I'm going to change quarters, anyway."

Nick saw no reasonable excuse for an abrupt departure, so he stepped into the room and looked around.

Pinkey followed him in, and carelessly closed the door.

The landlady, with a white, scared face, turned and almost sprang downstairs.

The parlor door was locked when she came to it, and she pounded upon it with one clinched fist.

"Let me in," she cried. "It is only I."

The key was turned in the lock on the inside, and the door opened.

"Why are you still here?" she cried, wringing her

hands at the sight of Blanche Martel's white, set face.

"Why don't you go away?"

"Go away?" repeated the other. "Why should I go away?"

"Because something dreadful may happen, if you don't. The officers may be here at any moment."

"Why should I go away?" demanded the other, fiercely. "And that man Carter so near his death. Why should I go away without looking on the dead face of the man who has tracked me like a blood-hound for a year."

The landlady only wrung her hands.

"I mean to stay here," went on the hard voice, "and see that the work is well done. When he lies dead before me I shall rest again. There will be no need to fly, then."

The landlady stepped to the parlor door, and opened it.

"Do you hear anything up there?" she asked.

Both stood for a moment in a listening attitude.

"Nothing."

"I thought I heard the sound of a scuffle."

"I heard nothing."

In the silence which followed, the sharp report of a pistol rang through the house.

Blanche Martel sprang toward the door.

"Great Heaven!" gasped the landlady. "Don't go there!"

Blanche tried to release herself from the detaining grasp of the excited woman, but all in vain.

As they struggled, a sound as of some heavy object falling to the floor, echoed down the stairs.

"There!" shouted Blanche, with a look of triumph in her eyes. "What we have been waiting for has taken place. Let me go!"

The landlady only held her more closely.

"How can we tell what has happened up there?" she demanded. "Nick Carter is a dangerous man. I beg of you to leave this place."

Blanche hesitated.

"Hide me somewhere," she said, at length. "What-

ever has happened, Nick Carter cannot even suspect that I am in the house."

* * * * *

"You see," said Pinkey, as Nick stepped forward at the closing of the door, "it is all nice and quiet here. There are no street cars in front, and the people of the house are orderly."

Nick walked carelessly about the room, but he never took his eyes from the face of his companion.

"That strap was put about your wrist for some purpose, my fine fellow," he thought, "and I have seen straps like that with billies at the end of them."

At last Nick stood in the corner of the room farthest away from the window.

Pinkey raised his hand to strike.

In a moment the men were struggling fiercely.

The detective had met a giant in strength and cunning.

It was impossible for him to reach his weapon.

The battle was one which must be fought out hand to hand.

At last Nick's feet struck some obstruction on the floor, against which he had purposely been forced, and he fell back heavily, striking his head upon a chair as he did so.

Dazed and stunned as he was by the blow, he saw that the bully was bending over him with the billy raised high in air.

That moment he believed to be his last.

Was that the sound of a pistol shot?

Was that the odor of burning powder in the room?

Was that heavy weight upon his chest the body of his late antagonist?

The articles in the room seemed whirling round and round.

He noticed particularly that the folding bed seemed gifted with the power of motion.

Surely it moved and creaked as if some power within were trying to force it apart.

In a moment there could be no doubt that in this, at least, his senses had not deceived him.

The bed part of it fell to the floor with a crash.

The next moment the face of his assistant, Ida Jones, was bending over him, tugging meanwhile at the heavy body lying across his chest.

A pistol he had seen her practice with lay upon the floor by his side.

The origin of the shot which had saved his life was no longer a mystery.

It had come from the folding bed, which had fallen apart during the girl's efforts to extricate herself.

When the landlady entered the room, Nick was bending over the wounded bully, with the form of the unconscious girl in his arms.

For the first time in her life she had fainted.

CHAPTER VI.

NIGHT AT THE WORLD'S FAIR GROUNDS.

Two figures crept from the heavy shadows lying about the agricultural building at the World's Fair grounds, and advanced stealthily across the foot-bridge over the lagoons.

In a moment they were on the wooded island lying to the east of the transportation building, and were soon concealed in the tall shrubbery with which the place is still covered.

One figure was that of a short, heavily-built man. The other presented a slight and boyish appearance.

"I thought I saw the figure of a man standing there by the bridge as we crossed," said the younger person. "Are you sure there is no one here to spy upon us?"

The voice was unmistakably that of Blanche Martel.

"One of the watchmen, probably," said Pinkey; "but he won't make any trouble. They think we're entitled to get a view of the grounds by moonlight; he doesn't?"

The bully chuckled coarsely as he spoke.

"How long have we got to stay here?"

"Not very long, I hope."

"Where did you leave Sarah?"

"At the Twenty-second street garden. Maynard is to meet her there with the money."

"I'm getting tired of all this," said Blanche.

"Nick Carter has made it pretty hot for us."

"Yes, and he'll keep on doing it until I get out of the country."

"It beats the devil that we should all go broke just at this time," said Pinkey, with an oath.

"Yes; everything goes wrong."

"Well," said Pinkey, "if we hadn't had a little luck to-day, you'd be in jail now."

"What thing in the shape of luck has happened to-day?"

"If that girl hadn't fainted when she fell out of the folding bed at the house on Dearborn street, she'd have told Nick Carter that you were in the house, and that would have settled it."

"Yes, I presume so. You were stunned by her bullet, and couldn't have helped me."

"And so," continued Pinkey, "Nick Carter didn't know how near he was to you. Not knowing, he just picked the girl up in his arms, and made for the street."

"We must keep a sharp eye on that girl," said Blanche.

"She's a cute one. Who else would have thought of hiding in that folding bed?"

Blanche caught her companion quickly by the arm, and checked him as he was about to speak again.

"Look there!"

As she spoke, Blanche pointed with her hand toward the open space in front of the transportation building.

"Those people have passed up and down there two or three times since we have been standing here," she said. "I wonder what they want?"

As she spoke, two figures stepped into the moonlight again.

"One is a watchman," said Pinkey. "So it's all right."

"But the woman with him—did you see her face?"

"No," said Pinkey; "but it's probably his wife."

"I may be nervous," said Blanche; "but I thought I caught a resemblance between that woman and Polly."

The two stood in the shadow of the trees some moments in silence.

The watchman and his companion had disappeared.

As they stood there, the dash of water came faintly to their ears.

"I wish Sarah would come," said Blanche, taking her companion by the arm again.

"She'll be here directly."

"Do you know," said Blanche, in a whisper, "that I have an idea that some one is swimming across the lagoon?"

Pinkey laughed.

"It would be horrible to meet the officers here," whispered Blanche. "We would have no possible chance of escape."

Pinkey left his companion's side, and advanced toward the north end of the lagoon.

"Where are you going?"

The man motioned for the woman to remain where she was, and crept on toward the shrubbery.

Reaching the bank, he saw that the water lay still and smooth in the moonlight.

No boat or floating figure was in sight.

His face was pale as death.

"We never should have come here!" he growled, with an oath. "We have made a fatal mistake."

"Why do you say that?"

Pinkey started, and half drew a weapon before he recognized the voice of Blanche Martel, who had followed him.

"Why do you say that?" she repeated.

"I remember now," said Pinkey, "that that girl must have been secreted in the folding bed when the landlady and I talked about this appointment."

"What is to be done?"

"Stay here and fight it out! You have a way of settling Nick Carter, if he attempts to arrest you."

Pinkey pointed toward the emerald eyes and exposed fangs of the snake brooch as he spoke.

"Hush!" said Blanche. "No one has crossed the bridge, and there is certainly some one else on the island."

The faint rustle of foliage came from the direction of the eastern bank.

"Now, then," said Pinkey, "we must separate. Conceal yourself in the shrubbery there by the bridge and watch for Sarah Cathcart."

"And you?"

"I'll soon find out whether there is any one else on the island."

"Remember this," said Blanche, as the other turned away, "for something may happen before we meet again. I have arranged with one of the clerks in the drug store in the auditorium building for a supply of the powder for my brooch to-morrow morning. If I get the money to-night, I shall go directly from that place to the Illinois Central Depot and leave for the East."

Pinkey made his way carefully through the shrub-

bery and disappeared, and Blanche secreted herself near the approach to the bridge.

For some moments she listened intently.

A sound of voices came from one of the buildings across the water.

A light breeze stirred the foliage of the trees, and a night bird called out to its mate.

There were no other sounds.

After some moments the figure of a woman crossed the clear space at the end of the bridge, and stepped upon the structure.

Blanche heard the voice of a watchman, and saw the woman turn back.

She was positive that the woman was Sarah Cathcart.

She was about to spring forward to overtake her when the noise of a struggle in the thicket attracted her attention.

She heard the shuffling of feet, and the sound of a heavy blow.

Then all was still for a moment.

Then came the sound of oars from the north.

Some one was rowing across the lagoon.

Two watchmen, who had evidently heard the struggle, advanced to the bridge, and stood looking toward the island.

"I was right," thought the frightened woman. "Some one swam the lagoon a short time ago, and has met Pinkey in the thicket."

The girl was terribly excited.

She had no means of knowing the outcome of the struggle which she had heard.

Her only course seemed to be to lie still in her hiding-place and wait.

If her companion had come off victorious, he would soon come back to her.

If he had been injured or placed under arrest, her only safety was in concealment.

Again the woman advanced toward the opposite end of the bridge, and again the watchman stopped her.

"There's something going on over there that I don't quite understand," Blanche heard the watchman say. "A little while ago I heard the sound of blows, and now some one is crossing the lagoon at the north end."

Blanche could not hear the woman's reply.

"I can't help that," said the gruff voice of the watchman. "If your friends are over there, you may stay here until they cross the bridge. No one else crosses to the island until I know what is going on there."

The woman drew back, and once more Blanche was about to leave her place of concealment.

For the second time a noise in the shrubbery of the island attracted her attention.

This time it was not the sound of a struggle.

It was a sharp, clear, click, click, like the fastening of handcuffs, or the cocking of a single-action revolver.

The next moment she was startled by the sound of footsteps approaching the place where she lay concealed.

The intruder paused a few steps away, and looked carefully about.

Although he stood in the shadow of the trees, Blanche could see that it was the watchman she had seen on the opposite side of the lagoon a short time before.

He stood for a moment as though undecided, and then thrust aside the bushes which formed Blanche's only shelter.

"You may as well come out," said a quiet voice.

The barrel of a pistol gleamed in the moonlight, and Blanche saw that all resistance was useless.

"There is no harm in lodging here, I hope?" she

said, imitating a sleepy yawn. "I have no other place to go."

"That won't do, Blanche Martel. I have run you to earth at last."

The voice was unmistakably that of Nick Carter. The woman started back in dismay.

"Come!" said Nick, "step out here in the moonlight."

Just then two watchmen stepped upon the loose planks of the improvised bridge, and moved toward the spot where the detective and his prisoner were standing.

Whatever was to be done, must be done quickly.

In a moment the situation would be explained to the watchman by the detective, and then all would be lost.

"You are mistaken," Blanche said, thrusting her face almost into that of the detective. "Look at me well, and see if I am the person you are in search of."

Nick drew a pair of handcuffs from his pocket.

"It seems to me," he said, slowly, "that you might occasionally go out without that tell-tale snake brooch."

Blanche leaned forward until her breast was within half a foot of the detective's face.

As Nick reached out to make use of the handcuffs, the woman pressed her right hand nervously to her side.

A foul-smelling spray struck the detective full in the mouth and nostrils.

His throat and brain seemed on fire.

He staggered for a moment, clutched at the shrubbery for support, and fell senseless to the earth.

The footsteps of the watchman were no longer heard on the bridge.

They had reached the soft turf of the island, and were within a few yards of where the woman stood beside the prostrate officer.

In a moment Blanche stood by their side.

"I am glad you came," she said, in a trembling voice. "My companion has disappeared, and I am afraid to be in this desolate spot alone."

One of the watchmen grasped the seeming boy by the arm.

"What's going on here?" he demanded.

A third watchman crossed the bridge, and joined the little group.

"Here, George!" said the first speaker, "you take this lad over there and keep him in a safe place until we find out what's going on here."

The watchman addressed as George seized Blanche roughly, and conducted her across the bridge.

"Now," he said, seating himself by her side on a pile of timber, "you stay here until those men make their report."

In the meantime the two watchmen were making a systematic search of the island.

In a moment the one nearest the bridge heard a cry from his companion farther north.

He sprang forward in the direction of the sound, and stumbled over the body of a man lying in the thicket.

He was on his feet again in a moment, and the two men met in the clear space not far away.

"The devil is to pay here to-night," said the first watchman. "There's a man lying back here gagged and handcuffed."

"And there's a dead man lying back here in the bushes," said the other, excitedly.

The men called out to their companion to make sure of the boy he was guarding, but received no reply.

They dashed across the bridge, only to find him lying unconscious on a pile of timbers.

The seeming boy had disappeared, and with him

the woman who had been waiting the return of her friends on the island.

A short time later a veiled woman and a boyish-looking youth took the cable cars northward.

On the same car a plainly-dressed girl sat seemingly half asleep on the rear seat.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SNAKE BROOCH.

The loungers about the Auditorium Hotel the next morning were unanimous in the opinion that the young girl who sat writing at a desk in the drug store on the Congress-street side was the handsomest and brightest girl they had seen in many a day.

The girl, however, seemed to pay very little attention to the glances and remarks of the fashionably-dressed young men who lounged about the place.

She had been at the desk but a short time, when a young fellow, who looked like a clerk in the establishment, entered and approached the place where she sat.

"Anything new?" he asked, in a low tone.

The girl shook her head.

"You have heard nothing from Mr. Carter?"

"Nothing."

"Isn't that a little strange?"

"I think not," said the girl. "We know from the watchmen that he left the island without their knowledge while they were waiting for help."

"But his prisoner left, too," suggested the other.

"It is my opinion," said the girl, with a smile, "that he was still a prisoner when he left."

"You have great confidence in Mr. Carter."

"Yes."

"Well," said the young fellow, "this is one of my first cases, and I hope I may succeed in catching her, if she comes here."

The young man took a seat behind the counter, and the girl went on with her writing.

As busy as she appeared to be, however, she subjected every person who entered to the strictest scrutiny.

In the stylish young lady at the writing-desk, no one would have recognized the second girl of the Dearborn street house, or Ida Jones, Nick's assistant.

As the young man sat watching the business going on about him, his attention was attracted by the tapping of a pencil on the girl's desk.

A messenger boy stood talking to one of the clerks in the prescription department.

"They said you would have it all ready," the boy was saying, impatiently, "and that I was to hurry with it."

The young fellow stepped from behind the counter, gave a signal to the clerk, and advanced to the door.

The clerk handed the messenger boy a neatly folded package, and stepped over to the young lady's desk.

"That boy," he said, in a whisper, "called for the powder arranged for yesterday. He is to be followed."

"Yes," said the girl, "and your young detective sat there almost asleep until I called his attention to what was going on."

The girl left her seat, and stepped to the door.

The messenger boy had disappeared, and the

young detective was walking wildly among the crowd on the walk.

When he saw the girl, he stepped up to the place where she stood.

"Did you let him escape?" she asked.

"He dodged away before I got a chance to follow him," was the dejected reply.

The girl stepped into the store, and put on her hat and wrap.

"There is no use staying here now," she thought, bitterly.

As she moved east on Congress street, in the direction of Wabash avenue, the conversation of two men standing on the edge of the walk attracted her attention.

The walk was crowded and no one noticed the girl standing there, as though in doubt which way to turn.

"Did you hear the news?" one of the men asked.

"What news?"

"Why, the handcuffed man who disappeared from the World's Fair grounds last night has just been turned over to the officers at the Cottage Grove avenue station."

The girl then saw by the badges peeping from beneath their coats that the two men were city detectives.

"It would be more to the purpose," said one of the men, "if that New York chap should turn Blanche Martel over to the officers here."

"But the New York chap didn't turn this man in?"

"Who did?"

"A young dude, who found him wandering around handcuffed, and led him in because he didn't know what else to do."

"Well, that's funny," said the other. "You know, of course, that the man Maynard was arrested last night?"

"By whom?"

"That's what we don't know. The chief knows, but he ain't saying a word about it."

"I guess it's all Nick Carter's work," said the other detective, moving along.

As the girl walked on toward Wabash avenue, an elegantly-dressed woman just ahead of her stopped in front of a window and looked in.

In a moment another woman stopped by her side and seemed to fix her attention at something in the window. The girl saw a small white package passed from one to the other.

She was certain that one of the women was Blanche Martel, and that the other was Sarah Cathcart. She had never had a full view of either one of the women, but it would not have helped her if she had.

No one would ever have recognized them in their present disguises.

The girl turned hastily about in search of the detectives, but neither of them was in sight.

She was at a loss what course to pursue.

At that moment some one touched her lightly on the shoulder.

She turned, to see Nick Carter looking smilingly into her face.

"Get a policeman," he said.

The women still stood talking by the window.

Nell saw an officer in uniform only a few feet away, and beckoned him to her side.

She turned to see that Nick Carter grasped each one of the women firmly by the arm.

"You may as well give me that package," he said, addressing one of them. "You can't make prussic acid out of that?"

In a moment the women and the two officers were in a carriage, and were rapidly driven toward the Harrison street station.

"That's a mighty handy little assistant you've got there," said the captain, as the prisoners were marched away to their cells.

Nick smiled.

"She came here late last night," continued the captain, "and reported that Blanche Martel would call for a certain powder at the Auditorium drug store this morning. So we had the place watched. It seems she had track of Blanche Martel once last night, but lost her while following her around the city."

"Yes," said Nick, "she would go to the World's Fair grounds with me last night. She wanted to be on deck all the time."

"I didn't do anything wrong, did I, Mr. Carter?" asked Ida, stepping up to him with a smile.

"You did nobly," said Nick, "except that you made a good deal of noise with those oars after I swam over to the island. If we had reached the island first, you see I would not have got wet, but we were delayed."

"I don't understand," said the captain, turning to Nick, "how you came to go to the Auditorium this morning."

"Why," was the reply, "I heard the same talk Ida

did about the woman's intention to go there after a powder, and I was there a long time before she was this morning."

"Well, it's been a great chase," said the captain.

"I suppose you'll capture the big reward."

"But the mystery still remains to be solved," said Nick. "I want to know what killed Detective Green and the park policeman. When I know that, I shall know what keeled me over last night."

When the clothing of Blanche Martel was searched that day the mystery was solved.

One of the most ingenious contrivances that ever served the purpose of murder was found upon her person.

Inside the dress, just above the waistband, on the right-hand side, were found two small rubber-ball pumps, such as are used for ordinary spray producers.

From these, two tubes led up to a bottle suspended round the neck.

This had two compartments, and two necks closed by rubber stoppers, through which ran two tubes, which ended in the mouths of the two golden serpents coiled in the form of a brooch.

The horrible apparatus was so arranged that, on working the ball-pumps by pressing the right arm against the side, two jets of vapor could be projected from the serpents' mouths.

These jets formed, when united, what was practically a vapor of prussic acid, which would be blown directly in the face of any one within a couple of feet of the brooch, and would, of course, kill them almost instantly.

To the wearer of the brooch there would be little

or no danger, provided she held her breath for a couple of minutes and moved quickly away, as the gas mixes very rapidly with the air and is soon lost.

In a confined space like the 'bus, the atmosphere could be so saturated that it would be death to breathe it.

The park policeman had evidently received more than one spray of the deadly gas as he lay unconscious on the ground.

Only for the timely arrival of the watchmen in the World's Fair grounds, Nick Carter would probably have been served in the same way, and would have been found dead there in the morning.

Blanche Martel was held in Chicago for the murder of Fred Green, and was convicted and executed.

Sarah Cathcart, Maynard, Pinkey and the landlady were charged with being accessories after the fact, and were convicted and given long-time sentences.

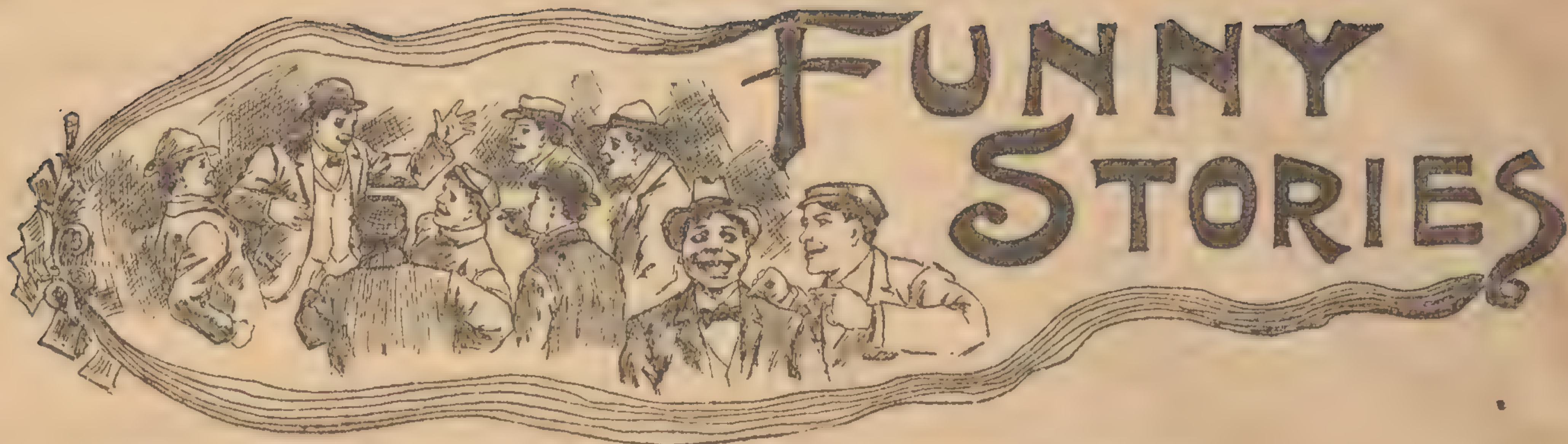
Of course, the young man arrested upon suspicion of having committed the murder in the 'bus was released at once.

He complimented Nick warmly on the manner in which he had worked the case.

Ida came in for her full share of the praise, and returned to New York City with Nick, a very happy girl.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 292) will contain: "Nick Carter's Note of Warning; or, The Murder of the Empress." The note of warning was a lucky thing for Nick. How lucky you cannot know unless you read the story. One of Nick's most interesting cases will be made public in all its details in next week's issue.



Whew! What a gale of laughter this contest has started all over the country. It's a regular cyclone of merry ha-has that come, wafted on the summer breeze, from Nick Carter readers all over the continent. If you are a new reader and don't understand what this is all about, look on page 31.

The Mexican Variety.

(By John Bennet, Mexico.)

THE HAPPY PARENT INSULTED.

Old-Man Hicks: "Why did you come out before Sunday school was over?"

Dick Hicks: "The teacher said I looked like you!"

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

The Wife: "Mabel takes great pains with her singing."

The Husband: "Probably that's what causes her to make such unearthly noises."

THEIR COLLEGE STANDING.

Hojack: "Are those two men college graduates? I heard one boast that he had graduated higher than the other."

Tomdick: "No, they are Keeley graduates, but the boaster took the morphine course."

EXPENSIVE.

Attendant: "Heavens, doctor! there's a sponge missing. I think you have sewed it up in the patient."

Surgeon (a few minutes after): "Thanks for calling my attention to the matter. That sponge cost two dollars."

Right, All the Same.

(By H. C. Godale, R. I.)

Examination question paper:

"What is the difference between 500 and 2,580?"

Boy's answer paper:

"One is larger than the other."

GETTING EVEN.

Jaslar: "An accident happened to me night before last."

Snowler: "What was it?"

Jaslar: "I was run down by a horse-car."

Snowler: "Did you get hurt?"

Jaslar: "Not a scratch."

Snowler: "How was that?"

Jaslar: "You know that I work on a freight train."

Snowler: "Yes."

Jaslar: "Night before last we had a horse-car with horses on. It happened that this car was to be dropped off without stopping at all. The car was put behind the caboose, and I was stationed on the car, so that I could drop it off. When we were a little way from the top of a steep grade the car happened to uncouple from the rest of the cars. Of course, the car kept running from the force of its momentum. The car was just about to stop when we were at the top of the grade, but it started again and kept gathering speed as it went down. It kept running until it struck the rest of the car, which had stopped about half a mile from the foot of the grade."

"Is that enough for you? I guess that will pay up for the one that you played on me last week. Ha! ha! ha! do you see how I was run down by a horse-car?"

Snowler: "That's enough for me. Let's go in and have a beer to wash it down."

Scripture Sayings.

(By William J. Creemers, Mass.)

It was customary in a little church out West when the little children dropped their pennies in the poor-box on Sunday, to quote some little passage in Scripture.

One little girl came in and dropped her penny in the box, saying: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Another said: "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

One little fellow who strolled in last, with his mouth all smeared with molasses candy dropped his penny in the box, saying, "A fool and his money soon parted."

A Thick-headed Witness.

(By Wilford Ruble, Wash.)

Pat McCarty went all the way from Cork to Dublin to thrash Mike Malony, which he did, winding up the performance with the assistance of a "horseshoe." He was arrested and brought before Justice Simpleman. A part of the examination is as follows:

Court: "Well, sir, you came here from Cork, did you not?"

Pat: "Yer honor has answered correct."

Court: "You see the complainant's head; it was cut by a sharp instrument—do you know what cut it?"

Pat: "Ain't yer honor after sayin' that a sharp instrument did?"

Court (becoming restive): "I see you mean to equivocate. Now, sir, you cut that head; you came here to cut it, did you? Now, sir, what motive brought you here?"

Pat: "The locomotive, yer honor."

Court (waxing warm): "Equivocating again, you scoundrel!" (Raising up the horseshoe and holding it before Pat). "Do you see that horseshoe, sir?"

Pat: "Is it a horseshoe, yer honor?"

Court: "Don't you see it, sir? Are you blind? Can you not tell at once that it is a horseshoe?"

Pat: "Bedad, no, yer honor."

Court (angrily): "No?"

Pat: "No, yer honor; but can yourself tell?"

Court: "Of course I can, you stupid Irishman."

Pat (talking loudly): "Oh, glory be to goodness, see what education is, yer honor! Sure, a poor, ignorant creature like myself wouldn't know a horseshoe from a mare's shoe."

Two Jersey Jokes.

(By Percy Nichols, New Jersey.)

WHAT HE WANTED IN IT.

When the waiter brought in the guest's breakfast he set a cup of coffee down by his plate and the guest picked it up, and took a s.p.

"Cream in it, sir?" inquired the waiter.

"No!"

"Sugar?"

"No."

"Perhaps you'll have a spoon," smiled the waiter.

"No, I don't want a spoon, either," growled the guest.

The waiter was puzzled.

"Won't you have anything in it?" he asked.

"Yes, heat! Take it back," and the waiter took it back.

NOT A MAN.

"Our hero sat in the corner of the railway compartment devouring his newspaper," read Miss Myrtle Dolan from the latest book added to her paper-covered library.

"He was devouring what?" asked her father, with sudden interest.

"His newspaper, the book says," replied Myrtle.

"Go on wid yez. Oi t'ought t'wor a mon ye wor readin' about, an' now, be the powers! he turns out to be a goat."

What Troubled Johnny.

(By John Born, Wis.)

A small boy was going to Sunday school one hot Sunday morning. The road was very dusty and he took off his shoes, not wearing socks, and fastening them together with a string, he swung them over his shoulders. Presently he was overtaken by a rich gentleman who was riding in a fine carriage, and, being generous-hearted, the gentleman said:

"Little boy, would you not like to take a ride with me?"

The boy got in and placed his shoes under the seat. Said the gentleman to the boy:

"Where are you going?"

"To the Methodist Sunday school," answered the boy.

"I am going to the Baptist church some distance beyond, and I can take you all the way."

As they drew near the Methodist Sunday school the gentleman said:

"Are you not going to put your shoes on?"

"No," said the boy.

The gentleman was aware that it was allowed for little children to go to Sunday school in that section without their shoes on.

"Well," said he, "if you are ready before I am, wait here for me, and I will take you home. Leave your shoes under the seat. If I am ready before you, I will wait for you."

Agreeing to that, the boy goes to his class and the teacher reads him the lesson. By a remarkable coincidence, it is the story of Dives and Lazarus—Dives feeding sumptuously and Lazarus at the gate, eating the crumbs from the rich man's table. After she had read the story to him she wanted to see how much attention the little boy had paid; but the boy had not followed the trend of the story.

"Johnny," said the teacher, "where did the rich man go?"

He looked at her, surprised indeed to know that she was aware of what he had been doing:

"Why, he went down to the Baptist church, ma'am," he said.

She was puzzled now.

"No, Johnny," she said, "he went to hell."

"But, good heavens!" said Johnny, "he has my shoes."

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Diamond Dick, Jr., Weekly, Number 118.

Any boys who have copies of the above mentioned numbers should communicate at once with STEWART, Box 192, New York City. Unless you have one or more of the numbers above do not write, as no other numbers of the Weeklies are wanted.

Amateur Detective Work.

Boys, in reading one of the Nick Carter stories did you ever try to think ahead and guess who was the criminal in the case?

Each of the readers has a chance to find out how good a detective he is.

He has the facts of the case laid before him just as Nick Carter himself has.

Of course, he has not got Nick's experience or wonderful detective instinct. Still, he can prove whether or not he is a good detective by trying to decide in his own mind what the solution of the mystery is before he has read to the end of the story. The earlier in the story he is able to make his guess and the more accurate it is, the better detective he is.

We want to see what sort of detectives the readers of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY are.

We want one and all of you to write us, telling us whether you were able to solve the mystery that Nick Carter had to solve, before reading to the end of any of the stories.

Tell us how far you read before you arrived at your decision, and *just what points guided you in making your decision.* Your letters will be printed in this column.

276 Summit Ave., Buffalo, N. Y.

Fellow Readers: Why can't we have a kind of a club and write to each other and start a friendship in this way?

There are some readers in our own towns who we do not know, and if we became acquainted would be glad we met each other. If any of you would care to write to me, address me at the above.

I would like to hear from Miss Stockton very much.

Hoping to hear from some of you, I am yours for Nick Carter,
C. S. Illingworth.

Your idea is a good one. Let's hear what the other members of the league think of it.

Washington, D. C., June 12, 1902.

Editor Nick Carter Weekly—

Dear Sir: I have just finished reading No. 281. I suspected Crabbe from the time the light was turned out. My reason for suspecting him was this: Mr. Delmar said, in his story, that his diamond was colorless, and when he turned the light on Crabbe had his glass to his lips. Now, I said to myself that diamond is colorless, he (Crabbe) could pretend to be drinking and at the same time drop the stone in the water.

By reading further I found that my suspicion of Crabbe was well grounded as it proved just as I had guessed. I also suspected that Crabbe could see, because an acquaintance of mine has a friend who can see, but a very little in the day, but as well as any man in the night.

It was a clever piece of work to recover that stone from such a man as Crabbe. But no matter what Nick Carter goes at he always comes out on top.

Good luck to the Carters in all undertakings.

James M. Wade.

You've got the making of a fine detective in you, Jim. You certainly show great ability in the way you went to work on that story. Let's hear from you again.

Buffalo, N. Y., June 20, 1902.

Editor Nick Carter Weekly—

Dear Sir: Seeing that my first letter was printed, I determined to write another. I took this time for a

problem. "Nick Carter's Hunt for a Treasure." At first it puzzled me. I knew that unless the two other men were very shrewd criminals that they would not ask each other for the diamond. As it was shown that they were no professional criminals, and later in their attack on the blind man, I realized that they could not have the diamond.

I turned my attention to the blind man. I knew that, as he had to strip he could not have the diamond on his person. With the other two out of the way, there remained only the blind man and the owner, Mathews. To think that the owner had it seemed absurd, so I concluded that the blind man had taken the diamond, but how he took it, I never could guess. That part of the story of the midnight fight was very interesting. I believe that the Nick Carter Weekly is not only highly interesting and entertaining, but also instructive. It excels all others.

Respectfully,

Franklin Parker.

In reply to your inquiry as to whether we should admit a girl into our circle, I wish to say that we ought to admit her. The young lady has shown good judgment in her letter, and good judgment always counts in the making of a good detective. Look at Ida Jones, for instance. In many cases, Nick Carter could not have got along without her. I believe we ought to admit Miss Mary Stockton.

Franklin Parker.

All right, Frank. In she comes. Let us all congratulate her on her success. As for your letter, Frank, it's a fine one, and shows that you can solve a knotty problem. Write again.

Rochester, N. Y., June 22, 1902.

Messrs. Street & Smith—

Gentlemen: The following deductions as to the identity of the murderer of Robert Weldon in the story, "Nick Carter and the Thirteen Club," were all made after reading the first four chapters, and before going on with the story. I wish to submit them to the Amateur Detective Work Department, with the comment that whatever ability I have attained in this line is entirely due to my knowledge of Nick Carter's methods as shown in the Nick Carter Weekly.

Four persons would be benefited by Weldon's death, Dixon, Moloney, Madge Dixon and Cummings. Suspicion is turned away from Dixon by his conduct toward Nick, and Madge's conversation with Cummings showed her innocence.

By a minute examination of the scene of the crime, Nick discovered that the murderer was a man with unusually large hands. This was shown by the blood-stains on the clothes in the closet. Footprints showed that he limped in his right leg.

Cummings knew that Weldon had the papers necessary to get hold of the money, and evidently believed Moloney dead. This gives his motive for the crime. Moloney, of course, had as strong a motive in belonging to the club.

Remembering these facts, we must conclude that it was either Cummings who committed the crime or Moloney disguised as Cummings. Had Moloney been impersonating Cummings, as the connection with the other murders of a girl resembling Madge might lead us to think, he would have done so, only on the possibility of his being seen by some chance passerby. But the footprints showed that the murderer limped. Moloney, impersonating Cummings, never would have thought of limping when there was no one to see him do it. Hence, Cummings was the murderer.

Very truly yours,
Paul F. Case.

You are certainly an apt pupil of Nick Carter. Your deductions and logic are apparently without a flaw, and we are glad to compliment you on your ability in this line.

We would be pleased to hear from you again.

New York City, June 23, 1902.
Editor Nick Carter Weekly—

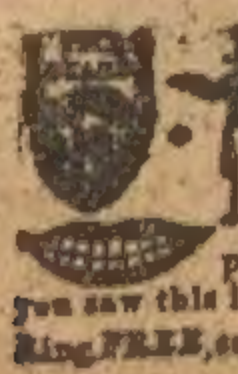
Dear Sir: Long before you started Amateur Detective Work in the back of the Nick Carter Library, I tried to solve the mystery and many times succeeded. Before I started reading Nick Carter I thought it was trash made up from any old thing, but on reading them I find that they are the best of books. I have just finished reading "Nick Carter's Pullman Car Plot," and at first was puzzled how Black Bart discovered Nick was on the train and went carefully over the whole thing again to find if I had skipped any possible clew. I never look to see how a story ends, but draw my conclusions before I finish or about in the middle, and I often come out right.

As Doyle says in one of his detective stories that every new case that comes to light has old features in it and by comparing the two come to the right conclusion.

Nick, Chick and Patsy and also Ida are all right. I hope to see this in the paper soon, and hope I do it well enough to solve a big mystery some day.

Yours truly,
Fred C. Miles.

Good work, Fred. Write again. You have decided ability.

 \$1 worth of Tricks & Make-ups, sent postpaid for 25 cents stamps or silver. A nice Moustache or full Beard, Irish or Slide Whiskers, any color, bottle Spirit Gum to stick them on. Box of Burnt Cork to blacken up. Im. Rubber Mouth, big teeth, secret & apparatus for performing the great vanishing half-dollar trick. This big offer is to get your address to send my large list. cat'g of plays, wigs, tricks & agts. latest novelties. Mention paper you saw this in and I will also put in a Heavy GOLD plate finger Ring FREE, send also. Address Chas. Marshall, Mfr., Lockport, N.Y.

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YOU ALL KNOW what rattling funny stories we printed in the recent contests. We are following them with another of the same kind. You have just as good a chance in this contest as any other boy in America, whether you entered the other contest or not. We want

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Think of the funniest story of which you have ever heard, or the best joke. Write it out and send it to us—then look out for funny stories. We are publishing in this contest some of the best side-splitters that ever came out of the joke factory. Remember the prizes we are offering. In this contest there are

Fifty New Prizes

FIVE FIRST PRIZES The five boys who send in the five funniest stories will each receive **TEN BOOKS** from the list given in No. 280. The list includes some of the best detective stories, tales of adventure, and most interesting boys' stories ever written.

TEN SECOND PRIZES The ten boys who send in the next funniest stories will each receive any **FOUR BOOKS** they may select in the list in No. 280.

FIFTEEN THIRD PRIZES The fifteen boys who send us the next funniest stories will each receive any **THREE BOOKS** they may select in the list in No. 280. The twenty boys who send in next funniest stories will receive any **TWO BOOKS** they may select in the list in No. 280.

HERE ARE THE DIRECTIONS

This contest will close September 1st. Remember, whether your story wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with your name.

To become a contestant for these prizes you must cut out the Prize Contest Coupon printed herewith, fill it out properly, and mail it to NICK CARTER WEEKLY, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City, together with your story. No story will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

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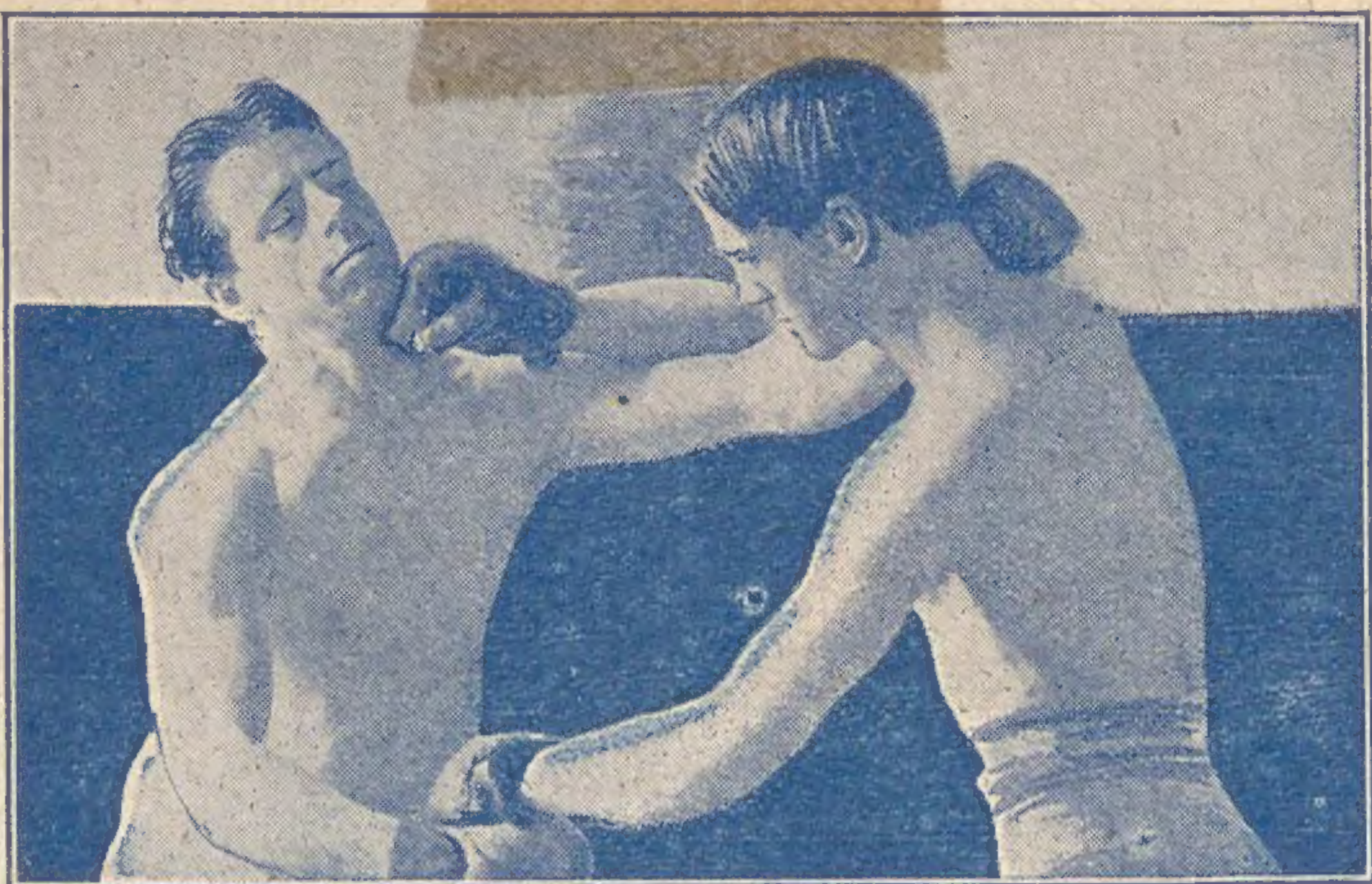
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